1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1896 NU31 Seri NU31

mon convenience. Usually the several jacales are entirely separate; but at Punta Tormenta, Punta Narragansett, and still more notably at Bada Ballena, individual huts were found either extended to double length or joined obliquely in such wise as to show two fronts (as illustrated in plate VI). The conventional frameworks appear to be common tribal property, at least to the extent that an abandoned skeleton may be preempted by any comer; while the addition of walls and roof appears to afford a prescriptive proprietary right to the elderwoman and family by whom the work is done—though the right seems to hold only during occupancy, or until the temporary covering is dislodged. 361 [342] 423

The jacales are without semblance of furnishing, beyond an occasional ahat and a few loose pebbles used as hupfs; though the nooks behind the bows and tie-sticks sometimes serve as places of concealment for paint-cups, awls, hair bobbins, and other domestic trifles. There is no floor but earth, and this remains in natural condition, except for trampling and wearing into wallows, recalling those of fowls and swine, which afford a rough measure of the periods of occupancy; there is no fireplace—indeed, fires are rarely made in the jacales, nor for that matter frequently anywhere; and there are no fixed places for bedding, water ollas, or other portable possessions, none of which are left behind when the householders are abroad. 352 [342]

Little is known of the actual process of jacal building, especially in Seriland proper; but the observations of Señor Encinas and his vaqueros on the frontier corroborate Mashém's statements that the houses are built by (and belong to) the matrons; that several women customarily cooperate in the collection of the okatilla and erection of the framework; that the only tools used in the processes are hupfs and miscellaneous sticks; and that the placing and fitting of the beams and tie-sticks are accompanied by a chant, usually led by the eldest matron of the group. The same informants support the ready inference from the structure that the shrubbery and other material forming walls and roofs are gathered and placed from time to time by the women occupying the jacales. 342 462 [423]

The Seri building chant is suggestive. Neither Señor Encinas nor Mashém regarded it as religious or even ritualistic, but merely as a work-song designed (in the naïve notion of the latter) to make the task lighter; and it seems probable that the local interpretation is correct. If so, the simple chant at once offers rational explanation for its own existence, and opens the way to explanation of the elaborate building rituals of more advanced tribes. The work-song is a common device in many lowly activities, ranging from those of children at play to those of sailors at the windlass, and undoubtedly serves a useful purpose in guiding, coordinating, and concentrating effort; to some extent the vocal accompaniment to the manual or bodily action apparently expresses that normal interrelation of functions manifested by second- 182 342 533

1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

182 342 533 ary sense-effects (as when the sense of smell is intensified by exercise of the organs of taste), or, in another direction, by the habit of the youthful penman who shapes his letters by aid of lingual and facial contortion; yet it is a characteristic of primitive life—one doubtless due to the interrelations of psycho-physical functions—to not only employ but to greatly exalt vocal formulas associated with manual activities, so that words, and eventually *the* Word, acquires a mystical or talismanic or sacred significance pervading all lower culture—indeed the savage shaman is unable to work his marvels without mumbled incantations ending in some formulated and well-understood utterance, and his practice persists in the meaningless mummery and culminating "presto" of modern juggery. So, viewed in the light of psycho-physical causes and prevalent customs connected with vocal formulas, it would seem probable that the conventional features of the Seri jacales are crystallized in the tribal lore quite as effectually through the associated work-chants as through direct memory of the forms and structures themselves. And the simple runes chanted in unison by Seri matrons engaged in bending and lashing their okatilla house-bows apparently define a nascent stage in the development of the elaborate fiducial house-building ceremonies characteristic of various higher tribes; for the spontaneous vocal accompaniment tends naturally to run into ritual under that law of the development of myth or fable which explains so many of the customs and notions of primitive peoples.[1]

APPARELING

177 291 Slightly as they have been affected by three centuries of sporadic contact with higher culture, the Seri reveal many marks of acculturation; and the most conspicuous of these are connected with clothing, especially on the frontier, where women and even warriors habitually wear a livery of subserviency in the form of cast-off Caucasian rags (as illustrated in most of the photographs taken at Costa Rica). Even in the depths of Seriland the native fabrics are largely replaced by white men's stuffs, obtained by barter, beggary, and robbery; yet it is easy to distinguish the harlequin veneer of borrowed trappings from the few fixed types of covering that seem characteristic.

The most distinctive piece of apparel is a kilt, extending from waist to knees, worn alike by men and women and the larger children. Aboriginally it was either a birdskin robe or a rectangle of coarse textile fabric, secured at the waist by a hair-cord belt; acculturally it is usually a rectangle of manta (coarse sheeting) or other stuff, preferably cotton or linen but sometimes woolen, fastened either by tucking in the corners or by a belt of cord. Good specimens of the acultural cloth kilt worn by men and larger boys are illustrated in plates XVI

[1] The law of fable in its relation to primitive surgery is formulated in the Sixteenth Ann. Rep. Bur. Am. Eth., 1897, p. 22.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930) 1931 NU31 Seri NU31

on a string around his neck, which he got from his father. It is a two inch length of cane, with a wooden stopper, containing a white powder of stone (?). A little of this powder put into fresh water, brings dew; into salt water, rain. 778 789

Similarly, Chico Romero wears on his neck a tiny spool-shaped object of wood, scarcely 2 cm. long, with notched ends. When he dies, this will burst; or rather, it seems that a larger object of the same shape, which another man keeps, will burst with thunder.

To get luck, a man paints a "cross" on his forehead, breast, and "bed" and goes to sleep. Then a dream comes in which he gets what he is thinking of. Sometimes the dream comes true; sometimes not. Some dreams are lies. 787

The soul (*alma*), he'ë'sax, is all over the body and is noiseless. It is "nearly the same as blood": when the blood is lost, the soul goes. Some say that when the Seri die they are reborn in the north as Cocopa. 774 795

There seem to be no special beliefs or practises about twins. 845

Antiso'ma (— Montezuma?) is the size of a child, has a beard, a golden staff, white clothes inside and black outside. He lives in a cave. Once he tried to take a young man away with him in order to dress him nicely. Later the young man's relatives went with him to find Antiso'ma again, but could not. 776

Songs

Toad was a woman who had only a breech-clout and wanted a cotton shirt. She said she would give herself to a man for one. 533

Coyote was a Seri once.

Pinacate (dung-beetle?) wanted a bride and was jealous about her.

Colapriste, the black-bellied ant, also was a man and wanted to marry the hoko'ctim ant. He was making a house of grass for her. She was afraid of him, and her relatives took her away.

Games

The four-tube-hiding game is played with canes open at one end. These canes are: blackened all over, old man; unpainted, old woman; blackened at one end, boy; blackened in the middle, girl. The boy and girl are made by slitting off slivers on two sides. The names serve as designations only; the differences between the tubes do not enter into the game. The player with the tubes turns around, puts a piece of twig into one, fills them all with sand, and throws them before his opponent, who tries to empty the twig from the *third* tube he selects. If so, he wins the canes, that is, the right to play. If the twig is in the first tube emptied, he loses 10; if in the second, 6; if in the fourth, 4. Counters are little natural shell disks. 524

000 wear ceremonial feathers as did our western Indians. I saw no skin or
164 cutaneous disease, or evidence of tuberculosis or of trachoma---the curse of our Indians.

142. One boy-child of five years was a handsome child---fat, round,
302 sturdy, with roving great black eyes, large thick lips, a picture of
[241] perfect health. He was almost naked. His hair was done in a pigtail
[837] with a red string braided into it. His face like all the others was dirty, but he waded into the shallow water with a short spear and I saw him catch two crabs with his little harpoon. The water did not bother his face.

415 They had no plates or eating tools, except large deep clam shells,
412 cast up by the sea, which served as cups and dippers. Their long, keen
364 belt knives were used for cutting, carving or skinning, and always the
[237] fingers for eating. They gathered in a circle around an olla of seeds of long grass growing on the sea bottom prepared by winnowing, parching and grinding, and then cooked with turtle oil. Each one dipped his or her fingers into the olla and conveyed them to the mouth without losing a drop, and licked them off with great relish.

231 The dogs eat with the family. There were six or seven half-starved
264 ones. If someone picked up a piece of turtle flipper the dog often took the first lick at it, bit off a piece or licked it before it reached the owner's mouth. The dogs were not punished. They were just slapped to keep them out of the pots.

123 We had a great time that evening in Seriland. The young man played
534 his violin. This consisted of a hollow box cut out of a *palo verde*
[824] tree, and a piece of pine about sixteen inches long; terminating in a
[288] hollow where a single peg was fitted. The one string was twisted deer
[237] sinew, and the bridge was a small round clam shell at the far end. The
[533] bow was a small bent stick and some black horsehair. On the handle was a wad of rosin fastened underneath. By fingering this string a few weak squeaky notes were made, and this was the classical music of the Seris.

Manuel Encina seized his gourd rattle and began chanting. Herrera tapped a tin can and I beat on an inverted basket and the orchestra
535 was in full swing. A young girl, Rosa, dragged out a turtle shell and
123 standing on it began to dance. This dance consisted of stepping up and down quickly with each foot alternately, and this stamping, barefooted, emitted a hollow sound. Every once in a while I let out an
[24] Indian yell which pleased the Seris very much. For two hours they had a real swell time. We took one flashlight of the proceeding.

[342] Each family was in their hut, which afforded very slight shelter
[362] as they were only partially roofed over and the sides were broken
[334] down in places. The huts were all adjoining and each had a little
[341] campfire, which did not give much illumination, so the dancing was in semi-darkness.

{text continues on p. 163}

535 semi-darkness.
123 Soon two little boys joined the dance, stepping up and down in the sand. Lighted only by the flickering flames of the driftwood fires on the shores of this mysterious and dreaded isle, the soft murmur of the sea as a refrain to the wild chanting, the weird circling of glittering eyes, and wild dark faces, presented a scene of uncanny and savage fascination witnessed by white men probably for the first time.

[533] After each stanza there was a short rest. The singing was similar to most other tribal chanting.

582 Bob made the remark that the girl was old enough to be broken in
836 by the old Chief. I said, "How?"
622

583 He said, when a girl thirteen or fourteen has her menses, the
[939] Chief takes her and goes through the family act. This is called 'breaking her in'. She is then eligible for marriage. A young man desiring marriage has to purchase the girl by giving the father a boat or rifle, both being necessary to the Seri's existence and pro-
585 tection. At the wedding they have sort of a fiesta and much mescal is drunk, which properly solemnizes a wedding.

944 When a girl has a baby it usually comes very naturally and easily,
945 but I remember one girl's first baby was three days in coming, and she suffered a great deal. This was on a subsequent trip. She was staying with many of her people on the mainland and someone asked them if they didn't want a doctor or other help. They said: No, they had one. It was a Medicine Man who chanted over the girl and dug hollows in the sand to fit her heels into. He said that the legs had to be kept apart. This was all he did. But ordinarily there is no trouble, and if a baby is born at noon the mother is up and doing, and cooks supper
[513] for her lord and master. The men treat their wives with kindness and each shares with the other any delicacy.

462 In Seriland domestic duties are reversed from the usual Indian
[303] methods. The men get the water and the women get the wood. This con-
[482] sists mostly of driftwood gathered along the shore, and it is a picturesque sight to see a string of women and girls bringing in loads of wood in baskets on their heads at sunset.

622 There are no plural marriages, but sometimes when a Chief is old,
595 or rather when his wife is old and can have no more babies, he can take a younger woman as his wife. The present Chief is getting old now, almost too old to break in the girls, so they may get a younger man. This might be called the perquisites of office. He takes the cream.

932 They hunt lice in the head and eat them. This is said to increase
825 the amorous desires. The penis of the male turtle is cut out and dried. This is pounded and pulverized and placed in the food of the women. This is said to create a desire for a man and the family act.

648 123 friend of his from Guaymas, although only the upper part of the sail was visible. This greatly frightened the women who began packing to escape to the interior. They thought they were friends of ours and it was a plan to have them land. Bob proposed to go out and meet them, and if possible get provisions. With the Chief and two other Seris, Bob and his brother, leaving the firearms behind, hoisted the sail and headed for the mouth of the bay.

When they reached the Infernillo the sloop veered away, its crew being afraid of being killed by the Seri. There were six men and boys and they mustered all the rifles and stood ready to fight. They had just had trouble three days before at San Estevan. At last the wind veered and they had to stop and Bob waved his cap. Finally they got close enough to talk, and then came on board and secured some provisions---a little coffee, sugar, fresh onions, tomatoes and rice, and a little flour for the Chief. They had a fair wind back and returned about dusk.

123 At night everybody was happy. I had gathered two pails of oysters that are exposed on the rocks at low tide and I had built a fire over them so they would open readily, and then had cut them out. We made a sort of stew then, enough to go around the crowd.

123 534 [515] After supper the Indians gave a dance, a very weird affair. I have seen nearly all the musical instruments used by the Indians of the Southwest and Mexico in their ceremonial dances, but the Seris were the first tribe I had ever seen use the bow and arrow as a musical instrument. A six-foot bow with a tightly stretched bowstring of twisted sinew was held, back down, on two inverted bowl baskets by one of three men, all of whom struck the string with arrows. This [533] emitted a musical baritone note like the vibration of a piano wire, in perfect rhythm to the weird chanting of the three musicians, singing a wild plaintive air.

535 123 The dancer, Manuel Encina, a grim old boy, facing the orchestra, mounted the back of a turtle shell resting over a hollow in the sand, as a resonator, with a long staff held in his right hand to steady him, and gave one of the prettiest exhibitions of the double shuffle on the rounded top of an oily old turtle shell that I have ever seen. At the end of each *canto* there was a rest, and then they went at it again. This lasted two hours, and was lighted by a feeble camp fire and moon and was danced on the shore.

123 Before daybreak the following morning we arose, loaded the boat, and then the Indians brought a lot of things, besides three or four rifles. Then two young Indians jumped in. We were so crowded that we could not move. The two Indians and two of our men used paddles as we were too crowded to row. There were seven men besides all the junk, and the boat was so loaded and so cranky there was imminent danger of capsizing. At the least movement she would dip to the edge of her

123 Clustered near this well were brush windbreaks joined together, divided
[361] by brush partitions all open on one side. Here were gathered several
[312] Seri families. There was no such thing as privacy or seclusion.
[342]

As soon as we stopped and unloaded we were immediately surrounded by a curious, half-starved mob of forty men, women and children, about fifteen to twenty children. All dirty, all ragged, all hungry. Some of them I recognized: others were new to me.

While preparing and eating our supper this motley crowd formed a circle about us and hungrily watched every mouthful. We gave them a little food and an orange all around, and they finally left. By that time we had also finished our bread and coffee and followed to the brush shelters.

535 A dance was immediately started. A place was hollowed in the sand,
123 a few short planks placed over it, and the dance was on. Music was
[513] furnished by men tapping on an inverted basket and chanting. Only one man danced at a time. Sand was thrown over the planks and the Indian danced a shuffle, scraping his bare feet on the boards. He held a staff in his right hand and danced to a song called in Spanish *El*
[171] *Toro*. Later on other dancers performed, then gave us the *venado* (deer) dance, taught them by the Yaquis.

This dancer represents a timid deer, hopping up and down to the time of a rattle held in the right hand, and the chanting of the singers. The *venado* dancers stooped over frequently, turning first to one side and then the other to look behind. Manuel Encina was the *venado* and Chico Romero, a very large young Seri, acted the part of a coyote, crawling and jumping on all fours and barking and every once in a while biting the calf or thigh of the *venado*, then jumping back and barking. It was acted with great realism, and the onlookers, especially the children, enjoyed it immensely.

A wilder, more barbaric scene was probably seldom witnessed in America than this gathering of Seris on the shores of the Gulf of California, dancing the *venado*. The camp fire threw a flickering light over dark fierce faces with low foreheads and frowsy unkempt hair.
[302] One man, Luis Torres, the head "ship carpenter" with a moustache and chin beard, his hair low-down framing his dark face, looked like a savage from the wilds of New Guinea. Another, Santo Blanco, a secondary chief below Juan Tomas, has a straggling moustache curling over cruel projecting lips which rarely smile, while his fierce black eyes peering through his black thatch of hair, have a perpetual scowl. The monotonous sing-song chant accompanied by the soft roar of the surf added an indescribable eeriness and weirdness to the dark night.

123 We soon turned in as it was then eleven o'clock, and we all fell asleep lulled by the waves of the sea.